

THE PERFINS OF JAPAN

By Gary Shayler

I first became interested in perfins when I acquired a Japanese stamp with perfin for my Japanese collection of Postage Stamps. This was many years ago and I found that Japanese perfins, although not common, were easier to find than as the majority of perfin collectors were looking for G.B. perfins.

During the "years I have been collecting Japanese stamps I have built up quite a few contacts in that country. One of these contacts acquired the "Adachi" Japanese Perfin Catalogue for me, and indeed it was through this same contact that the Perfin Society purchased a copy. I, and the Society, were given English translations of the catalogue by various members of the Society the need was made known.

From stamp fairs and the afore-mentioned contacts, I got most of my perfins and have built up an impressive collection over the years. I have around 2,000 Japanese perfins and hope that these notes will stimulate more interest in the perfins of Japan. Collectors in the U.S. seem to be keen on Japanese perfins, but I know of only one other serious collector in this country. With lots of British companies trading out of Japan and using perfins prior to 1939, maybe some added interest will throw up more information about the perfins and their users.

Japanese perfins can be found with the ordinary (Roman) alphabetical letters and also with Japanese characters and symbols. The Yokohama Specie Bank Ltd used both types. The Japanese character in Fig.2 is for "SHO" (in Shokin) meaning Specie or Gold. There are variants of this character for dies used in Tokio, Kobe, Nagoya, Osaka, Otaru and Dairen bank offices.

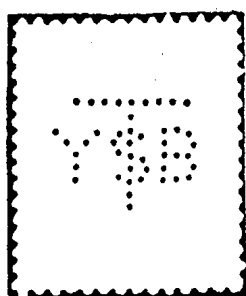


Fig.1.

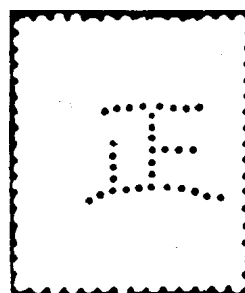
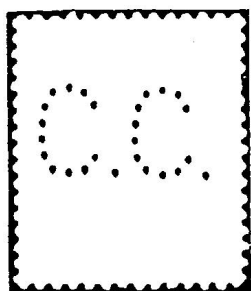


Fig.2.

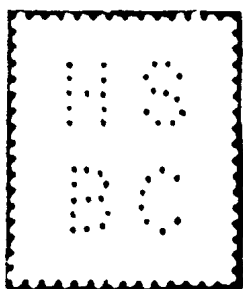
The users of perfins on Japanese stamps included banks, shipping agents, cotton/seed/plant/silk merchants, and foreign companies trading out of Japan. The perfins first appeared in the late 1870's - shortly after the first issue of Japanese stamps - without government sanction. Previous to the official use of perfins, stamps were embossed - eg. National City Bank - but they are very difficult to see and therefore extremely scarce. Private markings, applied as overprints, are known from 1893 to 1909.



Some firms used the same perfin as others, even down to the same die. I have noted six firms doing this in the 1920's. Cohen & Co., Carlowitz & Co., Chin & Co., Dai-Itachi Trading Co., Rotteldam Co., and The Standard Blade & Produce Co of Japan all used the "C.C." perfin. It is probable they are all in the same ownership.

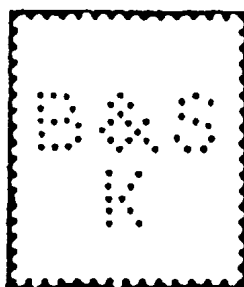
The most common of the Japanese perfins are those used by BANKS (eg. Hong Kong & Shanghai; Yokohama Specie; Deutsch Asia); SHIPPING AGENCIES (e.g. P & O; Butterfield-Swire of Kobe; Jardine Mathieson & Co.Ltd); AGRICULTURAL COMPANIES (e.g. Ashai Silk Co.; Tokyo Cotton Company).

BANKS



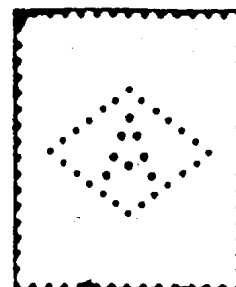
Hong Kong &
Shanghai Bank

SHIPPING

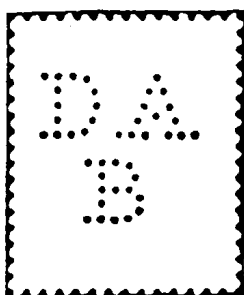


Butterfield & Swire
Kobe

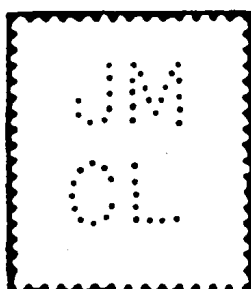
AGRICULTURE



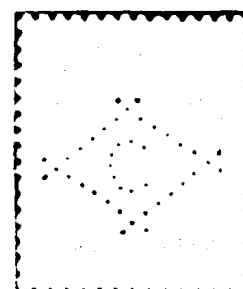
Ashai Silk Co.
Yokohama



Deutsch Asia
Bank



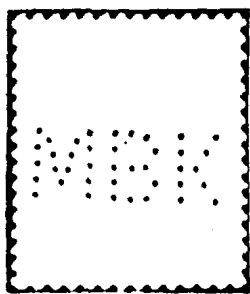
Jardine
Mathieson



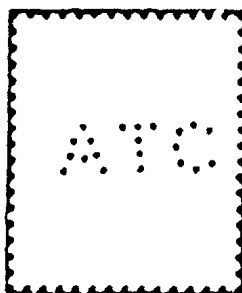
Tokyo Cotton
Company

Some of the better-known companies trading out of Japan were

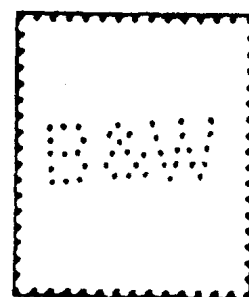
Mitsui Trading Co.
Yokohama



American Trading Co.
Kobe, Osaka, Hiogo



Babcock & Wilcox Ltd
Tokyo



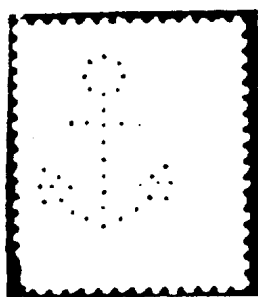
The Japanese Naval Department also used various perfin dies.

Type 1 was for general use in the Offices, Dockyards, Schools and the Naval Academy. The hospitals and Air Force Bases attached to the Navy also used this perfin.

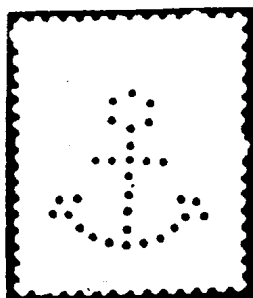
Type 3 - short sized anchor - was also used at the same establishments.

Type 4 - small head anchor - was used by the Navy Engineering School and Technical H.Q.

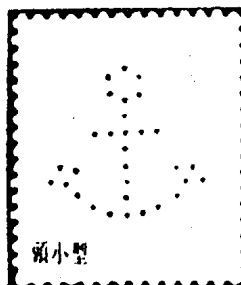
Type 5 - which has three Syllables above the anchor which, reading from right to left, say SASEBO - was used by the SASEBO Naval Port H.Q., the Dockyard, and the Hospital there too.



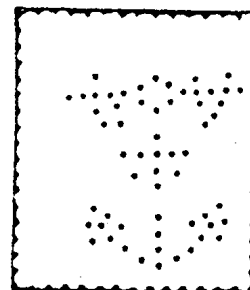
Type 1



Type 3



Type 4



Type 5

At the end of World War II the use of perfins began to disappear. Previously users had had to renew the Government contract to use perfins but after the war, as pins on the perfin machines began to wear out, users no longer applied for permits to replace their machines. No doubt the shortage of materials made this, an expensive undertaking and many contracts were refused. One, which was allowed on August 10th 1946, was that of the National City Bank. On June 1st 1961 no more new, or renewal, contracts for the use of perfins was accepted.